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CLAIMS

We claim:

1 In a television system in which at least program title information for programs which are to be transmitted in the future is transmitted in advance to form a channel guide list, apparatus comprising:

10 memory means for storing data representing said channel guide list and at least one e-mail address, said memory means storing user-entered data;

data entry means for entering said user-entered data;

control means for performing a search of said channel guide listing for
15 a match to specific user-entered information;

on-screen display means for displaying text or graphics under control
of said control means; and

means for selecting a television program for viewing;

upon successful conclusion of said search, said control means
20 providing at least one of the following actions: 1) notifying said user of an availability of said television program and 2) sending an e-mail message to the user at the at least one e-mail address to notify said user of an availability of said television program.

5 2. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein, when television program-
descriptive text accompanies said channel guide list, said control means
performs a search of said television program-descriptive text for a particular
text string which may relate to title, star, director, or context of said television
program.

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3. The apparatus of claim 2 wherein, in response to user-entered
data said control means controls said on-screen display means to display a
list of user-entered search criteria, and user-entered instructions for execution
after successful completion of each search.

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4. The apparatus of claim 3 wherein, said on-screen user-entered
instructions for execution after successful completion of each search include
instructions to record said television program and instructions to notify the
user of an availability of said television program by sending an e-mail
20 message to said user.

5. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein, said control means notifies
said user of said availability of said television program by sending an e-mail
message to said user.

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5 6. The apparatus of claim 1 further including a remote control unit wherein, said user-entered data is entered by means of a screen displayed keyboard operated by selecting keys of said keyboard via cursor commands transmitted by said remote control unit.

10 7. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein, said user-entered search criteria form logically-ORed search terms.

 8. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein, said user-entered search criteria form logically-ANDed search terms.

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 9. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein, said user-entered search criteria form logical compound statements employing logic operators, such as AND, OR, NOT, or XOR to logically-connect search terms.

20 10. In a system in which at least program title information for television programs which are to be transmitted in the future is transmitted to form a channel guide list, apparatus comprising:

 memory means for storing both data representing said channel guide list and at least one e-mail address, said memory means storing user-entered
25 data;

5 data entry means for entering said user-entered data;
control means for performing a search of said channel guide listing for
a match to specific user-entered information;
on-screen display means for displaying text under control of said
control means; and
10 upon successful conclusion of said search, said control means sends an
e-mail message to the at least one e-mail address to notify said user of an
availability of said television program.

11. In a television system in which at least program title
15 information for programs which are to be transmitted in the future is
transmitted in advance to form a channel guide list,
a television program searching method, comprising the steps of:
storing in a memory means data representing said channel guide list,
at least one e-mail address, and storing user-entered data;
20 entering said user-entered data via a data entry means;
performing a search of said channel guide listing for a match to
specific user-entered information; and
upon successful conclusion of said search, notifying said user of an
availability of said television program or sending an e-mail message to at
25 least one e-mail address in response to a user request.

5 12. The method of claim 10 wherein, when television program-
descriptive text accompanies said channel guide list, including the further
step of:

performing a search of said television program-descriptive text for a
particular text string which may relate to title, star, director, or context of
10 said television program.